

E. Howard Hunt released from prison 2/24/77

BOSTON (AP) — E. Howard Hunt, the convicted Watergate burglar and author of spy thrillers, flew to Boston Wednesday after slipping quietly away from a federal prison in Florida under cover of early morning darkness.

Hunt, 58, left the 475-man federal minimum security prison at Eglin Air Force Base after serving 32 months for his part in the June 1972 break-in at Democratic national headquarters.

Sources at Logan International Airport said Hunt, the recruiter and lookout in the break-in, arrived in Boston at about 11 a.m., a few hours after his release from the prison on Florida's Gulf Coast.

Hunt planned to talk to officials of the American Program Bureau in suburban Brookline. The agency, which is arranging a speaking tour, scheduled a news conference for Hunt for 10:30 a.m. Thursday.

Hunt, in the best cloak-and-dagger tradition, earlier evaded reporters who had camped outside the prison's main gate through the night.

Ellis Rubin of Miami, Hunt's attorney, said Hunt planned to fly to Boston, but he would not say who Hunt would visit there. Asked about reports that Hunt would be paid by a television network for an interview, Rubin said: "That will have to be announced by Howard."

Hunt had been sentenced to 30 months to eight years in prison after pleading

guilty to conspiracy, burglary and illegal wiretapping in the Watergate break-in.

His release was authorized by the U.S. Parole Commission last week after he paid a \$10,000 fine.

The first word of Hunt's release came when a prison official read a brief statement to reporters outside the gate.

After hearing the statement, reporters saw a prison laundry truck speeding from the prison gate. They followed it, believing that Hunt — who had worked as a laundry clerk — might be inside.

However, they lost the truck about one mile from the prison.

Prison official Dave Swyhart said later Hunt had left the prison at 4 a.m. in a car driven by prison workers, and the announcement was delayed two hours. Prison officials apparently used a side exit for Hunt's release.

Swyhart maintained that prison officials' treatment of Hunt was no different than that for any other inmate.

"We try to see that an inmate is released at a time that is favorable to him. Mr. Hunt had requested not to come in direct contact with the news media and we tried to comply with his request," Swyhart said.

Hunt's release left G. Gordon Liddy, the only original Watergate defendant in prison. Liddy will be eligible for parole in May 1981.